Participatory Value Chain Map

The main purpose of making value chain maps in a participatory way are:

- To facilitate better insight and improved understanding of markets
- To gauge the market knowledge of participants and identify knowledge gaps
- To identify constraints & opportunities for existing and new market channels

There is no such thing as a comprehensive, all-encompassing value chain map. There are many potential dimensions of the value chain that could be included in an initial mapping exercise: the product flows, the actors involved in the chain, costs and margins at different levels, etc. Therefore, it is crucial to choose which dimensions are to be mapped, based on the type of participants and the scope and objective of the value chain assessment exercise. Be clear on which exact product or value chain you want to map and the geographical scope (map the local market only, national level market or even including export markets).

The following questions can guide the drawing of a value chain map:

- How does the product ‘travel from farm to fork’?
- To whom do you sell your products – which different type of actors exists?
- What are the different market linkages (channels) from producers to consumers?
- What are the functions or activities of different type of actors?
- Where does the product (or service) geographically originate from and where does it go – what are the main trade or processing locations?
- What is the volume of products per channel - what is the number of actors?
- What is the price at various levels within the chain and what are the margins?
- What type of services (e.g. finance) or additional inputs are feeding into the chain?
- Which role or position do the poor/women have in the value chain?
- What are the key constraints at various levels and what are potential solutions?
- What are the advantages of certain channels?
- What are power positions within the value chain and how to overcome them?
- Which policies (e.g. tax), labels (e.g. organic, fair trade) or regulations (e.g. HACCP, GAP) is part of or affecting the value chain?
- How does information and knowledge flow through the value chain?
- What were the major changes last years in the value chain?

Step 1: Making a value chain map is difficult for women and farmer groups, especially when abstract tools are used such as arrows, boxes with text and general definitions as consumers, producers and wholesalers. Ask participants first to make a map by drawing the ‘product flow’ from ‘their farm house to fork’.

Example of a simple value chain map or ‘product flow map’

Source: Participatory Market Chain Analysis for small holder producers CIAT 2007
Step 2: When participants have already some level of understanding about the value chain, use large sheets, markers and meta-cards of different shapes and colours to differentiate actors, linkages and information.

- Place the cards of the producers (bottom), the consumers (at the top) and different functions (input supply, production, transport, processing, wholesale, retail at the side) on the floor.
- Use meta-cards to write down all different actors and market locations on separate cards. Be specific; try to get names of traders and companies on the map or the consumers and producers in different geographic locations.
- Place the meta-cards on the ground so you can still shift and change the map while discussing with the group, when the value chain is ready draw the map or fix the meta-cards on the large sheet.
- Invite traders, retailers or entrepreneurs when making the map

Example of a value chain map 2:

Source: Market training AFE Malaysia 2010

Mapping the increase of market knowledge
Keep the value chain map available and on display during all future group meetings to facilitate discussions. After gathering additional market info by rapid market appraisal or conducting exposure visits, you ask the women or farmer group to improve and add the new information to the map. When you ask participants to make several maps along the different stages of your intervention (before, during and after) you can capture the increase in knowledge of participants.

Some messages you can explain during discussions:
- Depending on only one trader or market channel creates danger of exploitation
- If you don’t know what happens after the collecting trader (where your product is going, how it is processed further or what are the price levels that consumers pay); you are in danger of exploitation
- If you decide to depend on others for marketing you have to accept a lower price and you create danger of exploitation. Only if you invest time and effort to explore the market yourself you can improve your price – better prices or sales doesn’t come for free.
- The only ways to improve your product price or sales turnover is by:
  1. Increase the price that consumers pay by improving the product based on consumer preferences and by making it more attractive than competitors.
  2. Directly sell to consumers and/or by-pass some actors in the value chain
  3. Improve your negotiation position by using two or more market channels